

Attached for your information is a memorandum of conversation reporting on a telephone call between the DI Iranian analyst [] and Secretary Carlucci. Last evening the Secretary contacted Mr. Gates and requested our Iranian analyst call him. Apparently the Secretary was interested in our analyst's interpretation of why the Iranians reacted so strongly to our attack on the two oil platforms.

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19 April 1988

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

1. Secretary Carlucci in a conversation with DDCI Robert Gates last night at about 2015 asked to talk to an Iranian analyst about Iran's clashes with the United States yesterday in the Persian Gulf. Mr. Gates contacted the Operations Center which called me about 2030 and asked me to call the Secretary at his home.

2. Mr. Carlucci said he he wanted to know more about Iran's motivations. He said he thought Iran had fought despite the overwhelming odds against it because sooner or later Iran hoped to take out a US ship, thereby weakening US resolve and causing a US pullout from the Gulf. I said that while this probably was the maximum Iranian goal, we believed Iran also thought it had to react forcefully or lose credibility and suffer unacceptable humiliation. The fact that Iran had acted with restraint in previous encounters with US forces had increased the likelihood that it would react aggressively this time. We believed Iran's previous setbacks had increased the influence of those who argue for confronting the US regardless of the cost and had put more cautious Iranian leaders on the defensive.

3. Mr. Carlucci noted that Iran had paid a high price just to show its resolve. I said that Iran's losses, while significant for the navy, were less noteworthy when compared to the overall losses of the war. The Revolutionary Guard is responsible for the bulk of Iranian ship attacks, and it was still largely intact.

4. Mr. Carlucci asked what I would recommend if I were chief of the Iranian joint staff. I said I would recommend standing down for now from further direct attacks on the US military. We thought this most likely would be Iran's decision, but we believed Tehran would look for other ways to retaliate. We expected Iranian terrorism against US interests and more military and terrorist attacks on Gulf state targets.

5. Mr. Carlucci asked why Iran had engaged in more mining. I said we had no specific information but believed Tehran's action stemmed from the same attitude that led to yesterday's clashes: Iran perceived that it was gaining little from its relative restraint and felt its long-term objectives would be advanced by a more aggressive stance. Iran cannot be irresolute when facing a challenge from the United States.

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Senior Iranian Analyst
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